

Today Representative Pete Stark (D-CA) and several additional Members of Congress introduced "The Child Poverty Reduction Act." Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) introduced companion legislation in the Senate. The bill amends the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program by making child poverty reduction an explicit goal of welfare law and creating a new \$150 million high performance bonus grant to states that reduce child poverty.

"A successful social safety net should be judged by its ability to lift people out of poverty, instead of simply reducing government budgets by kicking people off of welfare rolls," Rep. Stark said. "By making child poverty reduction an explicit goal of welfare policy and providing new funds for states that reduce child poverty, this bill focuses welfare policy on the correct goal of child poverty reduction and encourages states to protect the most vulnerable among us."

Senator Schumer concurred: "While poverty devastates the life of every person it touches, it delivers an especially harsh blow to children who are unable to defend themselves. By rewarding states that link reducing child poverty to welfare reform, we will lift more children out of poverty and send a clear message that welfare reform is about improving the lives of both adults and children."

The Child Poverty Reduction Act qualifies states for a new high performance bonus if they reduce their child poverty rate from the previous year's poverty rate. To ensure that states sustain their efforts to reduce child poverty, the bonus is awarded only to states whose most recent child poverty rate does not exceed their lowest poverty rate since the beginning of this bonus program. In order to encourage states to reduce poverty for children at all levels of need, the bonus is given to states that both reduce the overall poverty rate and prevent any increase in the percentage of poor children living in extreme poverty.

The Child Poverty Reduction Act has been endorsed by a number of organizations including: the Alliance for Children and Families, the American Humane Society, the Children's Defense Fund, the Child Welfare League of America, the American Psychological Association, the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, the National Association of Social Workers, Prevent Child Abuse America and Welfare Made a Difference.

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) said, "Children's success and well-being must be at the heart of genuine welfare reform. Yet children cannot thrive when families are unable to meet their children's most basic needs. The Child Poverty Reduction Act will recognize and strengthen states' commitment to children by making clear that reducing child poverty is a legitimate and pivotal part of welfare reform and will be

rewarded.”

Rep. Stark concluded: “Poverty can have negative lifetime affects on a child’s cognitive ability and school performance. Congress could make one of its wisest investments by providing new funds to reduce child poverty. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join us in passing this legislation and take a positive step forward to reduce child poverty.”